

# Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation

## News Release

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### **SVBF preserves more battlefield land at Cedar Creek** ***Property lies inside Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park***

MIDDLETOWN, Va.—In the early morning hours of October 19, 1864, Union troops encamped around Cedar Creek between the northern Shenandoah Valley towns of Middletown and Strasburg. They were just beginning to awaken when the crackle of gunfire and thunder of cannon alerted them to what would become one of the most sweeping attacks of the American Civil War.

Today, the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation announced that it has preserved more than 189 acres of battleground where Gen. Jubal Early's Confederates assaulted Federal troops that morning. As the site of the encampments and line of battle for the Union VIII Corps, the newly protected property saw some of the most dramatic fighting of the battle. By the end of that October morning, much of the VIII Corps either ceased to exist or was in complete disarray, having withdrawn miles northward.

The newly protected parcel—dubbed the VIII Corps Property—lies in Warren County at the heart of the new Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park and links previously protected areas within the park boundary. Along US 11, Belle Grove Plantation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation own and manage 696 acres. To the southeast, the SVBF has already protected more than 303 acres. The VIII Corps Property begins to knit together these disparate areas of the park and the battlefield.

Park superintendent Diann Jacox said, "This parcel is key to connecting the southern end of the park with the northern end of the park. This area not only contains a significant part of the park's natural and cultural story, but as we consider how visitors will one day explore the park, preservation of this parcel will enable visitors to move between the various other areas of the park. The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation has been a strong partner in the effort to protect this battlefield landscape and we are thrilled with this success today."

#### **A Partnership Project**

The project was made possible through the SVBF's annual federal appropriation for land preservation in the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District, matched with \$539,000 from the Commonwealth of Virginia through a grant from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. The SVBF placed a

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Cedar Creek Battlefield Preserved Acreage	
Belle Grove, Inc.	104
CCBF	309
National Park Service	8
National Trust	283
Potomac Conservancy	107
Shenandoah County	151
SVBF	492
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Total area preserved*	1,454

\*Including land in battlefield core and study areas,  
both inside and outside the national park boundary.

conservation easement on the property which is co-held with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

"Last year, Congressman Frank Wolf and Senators John Warner and Jim Webb worked extremely hard to ensure that the Battlefields Foundation's annual federal appropriation would include funds for this project," said Howard Kittell, SVBF Executive Director. "And the state grant got us to the finish line on a project that otherwise would not have been possible. We are grateful to our congressional delegation and to the Commonwealth for their commitment to protecting these incredibly important sites that tell the story of our nation and our region. The Shenandoah Valley and our country are the beneficiaries of their visionary leadership."

Congressman Wolf said, "This is an important project. It protects an important part of both the national park itself and the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District. Making sure that these significant places are available for our children and grandchildren is an important legacy for our generation."

Senator Webb agreed. "The preservation of threatened Civil War battlefields is one of my key priorities," said Senator Webb. "I believe that it is important for future generations to visit and learn from the very places where so many sacrifices were made, by soldiers and civilians alike. We are a stronger, more diverse and free nation because of these sacrifices. I am also pleased to see the sense of partnership that came together to make this land preservation a success story. From the federal and state levels, to the local work by the Battlefields Foundation, everyone involved should be proud of this accomplishment," Webb concluded.

Virginia Governor Tim Kaine commented on the state role in battlefield preservation. "This is a great success not only for Virginia but for our nation. Virginia's Civil War battlefields are significant threads in our country's historic fabric. The role of the Commonwealth in protecting these places cannot be overstated. Through the VLCF and the efforts of the Department of Historic Resources, we are working to be strong stewards of Virginia's historically important landscapes so that they can continue to educate future generations."

### **Battlefield Preservation an Ongoing and Timely Effort**

Kathleen S. Kilpatrick, Director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the governor's appointee to the SVBF's Board of Trustees, noted the ongoing and urgent effort to protect the nation's Civil War battlefields. "This is an important victory for those of us who care about preserving our nation's historic places," she said. "We have a small window of time in which to work before we lose these sites forever—we cannot afford to wait to do more."

The core area at the Cedar Creek battlefield covers 10 square miles, totaling more than 6,200 acres, only 1,092 of which have been protected. In the Shenandoah Valley, more than 16,000 acres of core battlefield land are still vulnerable and throughout Virginia and the nation, the numbers are even more dramatic.

### **Preservation Fulfills Wish of the Property's Landowner**

The Battlefields Foundation purchased the property from the estate of Goldie Cooley Hudson, a descendant of the family that owned and lived at Belle Grove Plantation during the Civil War and the Battle of Cedar Creek. The VIII Corps Property, which may have been a part of the plantation during the war, had been owned by Mrs. Hudson and her late husband, John, since the 1950s and served as a retirement retreat for the couple.

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Sue Ferguson, the Hudsons' niece, noted that preservation of the property was important to Mrs. Hudson. "We would like to emphasize the wishes of Aunt Goldie in the preservation of the open spaces which she and Uncle Johnny loved so much," said Ferguson. "They both loved and lived to care for the land. We are all so pleased to be able to complete this vision of Aunt Goldie's. To connect the dots from her generation to so many in future generations is a wonderful feeling of accomplishment."

Kittell expressed gratitude to Mrs. Hudson and her family. "It is especially gratifying to work with landowners who are so committed to protecting their special places, who want to know that future generations will experience their landscapes the way that their families always have. It's an incredible legacy that they are leaving to their community and to the nation. We are extremely grateful for their vision and hope that it will be an inspiration for others."

### **Protection of Natural Areas and Archeological Resources**

The VIII Corps Property contains 652 feet of frontage along Cedar Creek, a major tributary of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. Preservation of this area protects the stream's forested buffer and a cultivated bottomland field composed of prime agricultural soils. Portions of the property will remain in agricultural use while the Battlefields Foundation conducts archeological and cultural resources studies to learn more about the history that the land holds. This research will aid the Foundation as it works with its state and park partners to determine appropriate types and locations of future interpretive activities.

### **The Battle of Cedar Creek**

The VIII Corps Property is in the core area of the Cedar Creek battlefield where more than 47,000 Americans fought one another in what would become the last major Civil War battle in the Shenandoah Valley.

In the early morning hours of October 19, 1864, Confederate troops under Gen. Jubal Early marched north from Fisher's Hill. They crossed Cedar Creek and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River to attack Union encampments north of the creek and along the Valley Pike (modern US 11). The battle, which began as a Confederate victory and ended with a massive Union counterattack that ultimately turned the tide for the Federals, lasted all day and swept from the creek and river several miles north to Middletown before ending on the roads south of Strasburg.

In a 1992 National Park Service study of Civil War sites in the Shenandoah Valley, Historian David W. Lowe wrote, "The Confederate surprise attack at Cedar Creek is considered one of the most daring and successful maneuvers of its kind and is studied by military theorists today. It was a feat 'unduplicated' during the Civil War."

Cedar Creek, a focal point of Union General Philip Sheridan's 1864 Shenandoah Campaign, dealt the crushing blow to the Confederacy in the Shenandoah Valley. Together with Northern successes in the Atlanta Campaign, it spurred the reelection of President Abraham Lincoln a few weeks later.

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*Note: A map of the property may be downloaded from the news area of the National Historic District website: [www.ShenandoahAtWar.org](http://www.ShenandoahAtWar.org).*  
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Created by Congress in 1996, the **Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District** encompasses Augusta, Clarke, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockingham, Shenandoah, and Warren counties in Virginia and the cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Winchester. The District's legislation authorizes federal funding for the protection of ten Civil War battlefields in the Valley and for the coordination of interpretation and promotion of the Shenandoah Valley's Civil War history.

As authorized by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, the **Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation** serves as the non-profit manager of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District, partnering with local, regional, and national organizations and governments to preserve the Valley's battlefields and interpret and promote the region's Civil War story.

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**ON THE WEB:**

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation and the  
Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District:

[www.ShenandoahAtWar.org](http://www.ShenandoahAtWar.org)

Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park:

[www.nps.gov/cebe](http://www.nps.gov/cebe)

National Park Service 1992 study of the Shenandoah Valley's Civil War battlefields:

[www.cr.nps.gov/hps/abpp/shenandoah/svs0-1.html](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/abpp/shenandoah/svs0-1.html)

The Battle of Cedar Creek: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/abpp/shenandoah/svs3-15.html>

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